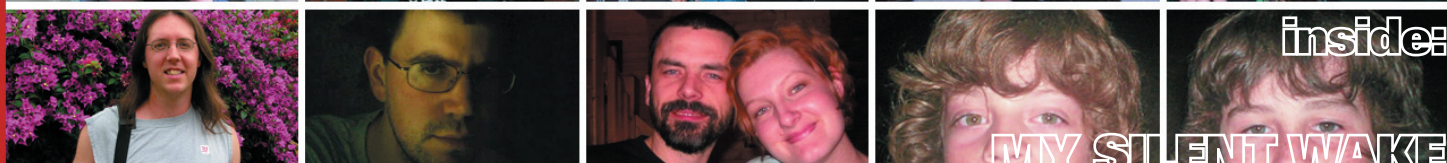


HEAVEN'S METAL

ALL METAL HARD ROCK ALL THE TIME
the lifeblood of Heaven's Metal Fanzine:

the subscribers



inside:
MY SILENT WAKE
JONATHAN PAGANO
MAJESTIC VANGUARD
GRAVE FORSAKEN



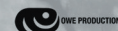
SCOURGED FLESH - RELEASED FROM DAMNATION
 'Scourged Flesh' reminds me of Mortification's self-titled era meets Paramaecium's 'Silent Carnage'. Dave Kilgallon's drumming is reminiscent of a young Jayson Sherlock.
 Full tilt Jesus Death Metal!



TRUE AUSTRALIAN JESUS REVOLUTION METAL!



GRAVE FORSAKEN - BESIDE THE RIVER OF BLOOD
 Finally evangelistic thrash/death metal from the next generation of aussie Christian metal. Unashamed lyrics with a bombastic sound track.



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Jayson Sherlock



Steve Rowe



Michael Carlisle



MORTIFICATION - LIVE PLANETARIUM - SPECIAL DVD EDITION
 This classic live concert marking the end of a classic mort line-up is now available on DVD with bonus material including 'Scrolls of the Megilloth' concept clip & US/European tour footage.



HEAVEN'S METAL

Gonna buy five copies for myself...

Well, you've finally done it ... you're on the cover of Heaven's Metal! I hope you enjoy this issue. I'm excited about the content – both on the inside and outside of this issue. The My Silent Wake, Majestic Vanguard, Grave Forsaken, and Jonathan Pagano interviews are all really cool. It's awesome to see Pagano putting a balance on music we don't often see – from the "art is good" mentality to the "music isn't everything" perspective. I'm also excited about future issues, as the Heaven's Metal staff is getting in some good fights about what to include and what not to include. Fists are being thrown, boots are connecting with teeth, hair is being pulled. It's an awesome display of violence! Well, I might be exaggerating a little bit, but it's all good. I think you'll like what's coming down the road. We raised the subscription rates, so we'll stop losing a tiny bit of money, and we've got a really cool exclusive premium coming soon to Heaven's Metal subscribers (can you say "music?"). Stay tuned for that.

Grace and Peace,



ELEMENTS

- 04 METALTRACKS** Grave Forsaken, Blissed, Johannes Jonsson's "Bullets from Sweden," Teramaze, Kekal, TSO, Morphia, Maylene, Eluveitie, Ultimatum, & "Meet the Press."
- 08 JONATHAN PAGANO** Todd Walker answers the "Where Are They Now?" on Novella.
- 12 MY SILENT WAKE** Chris Beck interviews "Mr. Busy" – Ian Arkley.
- 14 MAJESTIC VANGUARD** Johannes Jonsson talks to Majestic Vanguard's Daniel Eskilsson.
- 16 ALBUM REVIEWS** 12 of 'em
- 21 COLUMNS** Steve Rowe and Pastor Bob

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kekai
THE HABIT OF FIRE
MARCH 15TH



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METAL TRACKS

Hard-news-for-metal-heads



GRAVE FORSAKEN

BY LOYD HARP

Lloyd Harp: Tell me about your love for old school thrash and death metal, as well as some of the major influences on your sound.

Vaughan Gregory: One of the other advantages of this line up is our common love of full on Jesus metal, with particular attention to the early 90's thrash and death scene. We all went through high school listening to bands such as Deliverance, Mortification, Tourniquet and Vengeance Rising. My first exposure to more extreme music was "Warfare" by Vengeance Rising. When we got together in a band, it was a totally natural and deliberate thing to be influenced by those bands. When people hear Grave Forsaken, we want it to evoke memories of the early 90's. The Mortification influence is huge, because we're Australian and naturally fans of our countrymen. People often talk about how similar my vocals are to Steve Rowe's. I guess that comes from driving around for 10 years singing along to Mortification albums! Paramaecium has also been a key influence, and you can hear that in a lot of slower, more doom-oriented riffs that Elias writes. We all try to keep up with the latest thrash and death music as well. I really like Trivium and am impressed that a young band like them is having success with this style of music.

What are some of your lyrical/spiritual influences on the band? Does Grave Forsaken approach music as a ministry?

Lyrical, the focus is almost 100% Gospel and salvation. We believe that the message needs to be powerful and upfront. A lot of bands go for an allegorical approach to their message, but that is an approach we deliberately haven't taken. I've always been empowered as a Christian by full-on Jesus lyrics, so in the same way we want our lyrics to have that empowering effect for Christian listeners. Given the nature of our music, we don't like to leave anyone in any doubt as to what we're talking about. We really hope that Christians and non-Christians will be stirred into action by the directness of the lyrics. The key influences are the Christian metal bands like Mortification, Bloodgood and Sacred Warrior,

who always had a clear Christian message in the music. Spiritually, we are all about evangelism and empowerment. We really want the message to be heard amongst all the other messages out there. The way I justify it to people is to say that everyone has a message they are trying to give. Whether it's a humanistic and political message, all art is trying to say something. In the same way, our art is created to reflect the death and resurrection of Christ. To be honest, being in this band is such hard work that I wouldn't do it if not for the Gospel. We couldn't justify the time and expense if this was just a hobby! Every time we play we get a chance to speak to people about our faith, and the number of people who have heard about us is growing all the time. There are so many ways to spread the Gospel as well. We've played at church services that non-Christians have attended, plus we've handed out copies of our demo to dozens of non-Christians. The response we get is always similar – there's something in the message that strikes people. That's the power of God speaking to people through the message. I've been privileged to witness to people via email. We get heaps of e-mails from people who have downloaded our demos or seen us play live. Every person in the band has stories about people they've witnessed to purely because of their involvement in Grave Forsaken. It's a very powerful way to approach the topic of Christianity in a non-confrontational way. People are naturally curious about a bunch of metalheads singing about Jesus!

What do you think of the current state of Christian metal?

Interesting question. In many ways I think that Christian metal has never been better. Companies like Girder have increased the availability of classic material and labels like Bombworks, Retroactive and Rowe are endeavouring to put out quality new music. The music coming out is generally of high standard and with the internet it is easily accessible. Bands like Temple Of Blood, Immortal Souls, Ultimatum and Drottmar are as good as any that have come before.

News bullets

Blissed has released the third video from their *Corrosive* CD, for the song "Run." All of their videos, "Getting Better," "Superhero" and "Run" along with the coming videos will soon be available on DVD. Also, the *Corrosive* CD was nominated by the cGMA for Hard Music Record of the Year and the song "Superhero" was nominated for cGMA Hard Music Song of the Year. The *Corrosive Tour* will continue until September with dates being added weekly and will be followed by the next Blissed release two weeks after the final date of the tour! Recent dates added to the tour include Lakeshore Music Festival, Cornerstone and Dates with the recently re-united Holy Soldier.

Brazilian Strike Management & Promotion signs a contract with the North-American Christian Hard Rock band **Holy Soldier** working as official representative/manager for the band around South America, which will include promotion, concert booking, etc. The band came back in 2005, with members from the original line-up (bassist **Andy Robbins**, guitarists **Jamie Cramer/Michael Cutting**, drummer **Terry Russell**) and their new vocalist **Don Russell** and released a DVD, entitled *Live, Rare and Raw*.

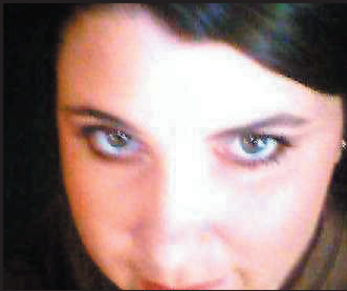
Teramaze, the band that brought you *Doxology* (1995), *Tears to Dust* (1998), and *Not the Criminal* (2001) have re-formed with a new line up. **Dean Wells** (the metal guitar genius) is still pumping out killer riffs and original vocalist **Brett Rerakura** is back with his amazing vocal acrobatics. The band is now joined by solid drummer **Andy Vickers** and bass player **Alan Heyne**. These guys are set to rock, only 3 months in the making and they have a couple of record deals in the works, and an album set to be out early May this year.

Fountain of Tears have posted a new single, "What Lies Ahead," for free download on their website [fountainoftears.com]. The song is from their first full-length album, *Fate*, due to be released on February 13. The album has 12 tracks, with a total running time of 55 minutes. Fountain of Tears is a melodic female-fronted metal act including **Joey Daub**, drummer for Believer, **Erik Ney** and **Mike DiDonato** from Sacramento, and **Jeff King** (formerly of Sardonyx). **Kurt Bachman**, guitarist for Believer, helped to produce the album. The album was mastered by Peter van't Reit (After Forever, Symphony X, Stream of Passion, Ayreon, Epica, Threshold, Saga, etc.) at FineTune in the Netherlands.

As the 2006 winter season came to a close, musical phenomenon **Trans-Siberian Orchestra** (TSO) capped off their 8th annual concert tour and most successful year to date. In an outstanding feat, TSO rocked more than 1 million people making their *2006 Winter Tour* one of the Top 10 attended tours in North America (according to Pollstar). TSO went into overdrive in order to accommodate the demand from fans for tickets, the band played 118 shows this tour alone, bringing the total to over 2 million people who have seen them in just the past three years.



Meet the Press



GENIFER GROFF

Age: 37 (years and blissfully counting, every year there is another AMAZING experience with my God)

Fav album of 2006:

Red's *End of Silence*. I love the strings with the passionate vocals and almost intimate screaming. I blew my speakers in my truck with this one, replacing them with a much higher wattage.

Fav album of all time:

This one is too hard... When I was a kid, it was Ozzy, Megadeth, Kiss and Alice Cooper. As I got older, and as each year passes I have a new all-time favorite. Each year there is something else I "just love" that much more. Last year it was Kutless, Falling Up, Dizmas and Mute Math. This year it is definately Kids in the Way, RED, Underoath, Demon Hunter and Project 86.

Fav movie:

Better Off Dead with John Cusack.

Interesting fact/something goofy:

I can't enjoy a rock show without a camera in my hand and I have never used earplugs at a show, so therefore, I can't hear a dang thing; I just get closer and closer to the thump of the stacks each show. Oh...uh.. no, really. I think that is how I got this deaf in the first place. I attend during the busy season for releases, probably 3 shows a week...

I once road the rollercoaster called "the Titan" at SixFlags over Texas in Arlington 10 times in a row.



ED HELLIG

Age: Ageless and timeless

Fav 2006 metal album: Most of my favorite albums in 2006 were not released this year (CRIMSON MOONLIGHT – *Veil of Remembrance*, NORTT – *Gudsforladt*), and sometimes even this decade (TROUBLE – *Psalm 9*). But for stuff released in 2006, I would have to say KRISIUN – *AssassiNation*.

Fav metal album of all time: Tough one ... probably a toss-up between VENGEANCE RISING – *Human Sacrifice* and TYPE O NEGATIVE – *October Rust*.

Fav movie: Francis Ford Coppolla's version of *Bram Stoker's Dracula*.

Pet's name: Gretchen (dog), Boots (cat).

Interesting fact / something goofy: Not to be excessively haughty, but I can actually move my ears.

Pantokrator will release a compilation album on Momentum Scandinavia. On the compilation titled *A Decade of Thoughts 1996-2006* there will be 14 tracks of which seven tracks are previously unreleased. The compilation is strictly limited to only 850 with a 12-page silver on black embossed booklet. The new studio album, *Aurum*, is also on the way and will be recorded and produced by Rickard Bengtsson (Arch Enemy, Spiritual Beggars). The album is planned to be released around March/April 2007 on Whirlwind Records. More info can be found on pantokrator.com

Endtime Festival is a very cool festival will take place March 30-31st 2007 at DIEZEL, Halmstad, Sweden. The bands that will play are **Antestor**, **Crimson Moonlight**, **Drottmar**, **Evergrace**, **Extol**, **Inevitable End**, **Harmony**, **Vardøger**, **Veni Domine** and **Virgin Forest**. [endtime-festival.com]

Veni Domine's new release has been delayed to the Fall of 2007. The CD will feature guest players like **Ez Gomer** (Jet Circus), **Peter Carlsohn** (Jerusalem, The Rise), **Gary Kusthoss** and **Andreas Olsson** (Narnia, Divinefire). [venidomine.com]

Classic hardrockers **Jerusalem** have released a double live DVD in Swedish from their *30-Years Anniversary Tour*, including tour diary, interviews with all 7 members, music videos, photo gallery (for computer only), and surprises. The gig contains 24 classics from their whole career, so any Jerusalem fan will really love this. On the gig there are 7 bandmembers on stage from both main lineups and at the end of the gig both settings are playing simultaneously which make classics like "Noah" to sound heavier than ever. [jerusalem.se]

Release dates on Rivel Records this year:

Essence Of Sorrow: *Reflections Of The Obscure* (Jan 24)

Miseration: *Your Demons, Their Angels* (Jan 24)

Oratorio: *Redemption* (Spring)

Heel: *Evil Days* (Spring)

Grimmark: *S/T* (Spring/Summer)

Christian Rivel: *The King Is Alive* (Spring/Summer)

Jet Circus: *Dance Or Die* (Spring)

(in cooperation with Hypersonic Records)



Roxx Productions and Retroactive Records will be working together on some releases this year. The *Up From The Ashes 2* DVD should be out this spring. In addition to that they will be working with **Once Dead** on their much anticipated debut release, *Visions of Hell*. Also coming this year is the debut release from San Diego's very own **Stricken**. Stricken was formed in March 2006 and is managed by Liferock Productions. Although they are a new band, all members are veterans of the Christian Metal scene. Comprised of former members of **Krush**, **Tower of Hundred** and **Fullife**, Stricken has taken the best of all three bands and combined them into the new project fusing together both old and nu-metal influences creating a fresh, new style of metal.

Retroactive is going to release the long awaited return of **Deliverance**. The label has several other releases in the pipelines for this year, including new releases from **X-Sinner**, **Ultimatum**, Seventh Power and more.

Mike Botello (of Awake fame) has a new solo CD, *A Timeless State*. [myspace.com/botellomusic].

METAL TRACKS

Page 6



CH-CH-CH-CHANGES

Times are changing. In the 80's Stryper threw bibles into the audience. In the early 90's Mortification succeeded in reaching the death-metal audience with the message. But times are changing. People walk away from preaching bands. Their CD's can't be found in any important European mail-order anymore these days. Many clubs don't allow bands to preach on stage. So Christians are forced to look for new ways to cross the message of salvation. In his latest column Steve Rowe (again) talks about bands that are 'hiding' the message. I think he completely misses the point, as the message of these bands is exactly the same as the one he's been spreading for years. They only share this message in a new way by using metaphors in their lyrics and by investing in personal relations instead of preaching. Times are changing and we have no time to lose. Instead of criticizing these bands, we should keep them in our prayers!

—Roy (Fear Dark, Holland)

Ed — Good point. You should write an article for us about that or something... Maybe next issue?

STILL CONNECTING

I saw your note in the current issue and just wanted to give you a little encouragement regarding the fanzine. I lo-o-ved Heaven's Metal in the early 90s, I read them all religiously cover to cover and was into all the bands. Fast forward 10+ years, and I just can't get into these bands that are the equivalent to our heroes today. I know that they are talented, and I appreciate and support them, and am delighted that many of them are so accomplished, but anything that's come out, like, this millenium I just can't really get into myself; although the old school bands — I love them just as much if not more today than I did back then. There was also the back page "devotional" about a year ago in the fanzine ... talked about how back in the day we were concerned about which song would most minister to unsaved friends, these days we're concerned with downloading the music, etc... Well, that fit me perfectly. So, needless to say, I love getting the fanzine that talks about the bands that I know and love, and whose demographic is more on my level.

—Erik, via internet

LET'S DO THE TIME WARP AGAIN!

I just received issue #66 a few days ago. I wanted to give you some feedback that you were asking for. First of all as far as the photo for issue #67 is

concerned, it looks like I'm probably going to have to snail mail it to you. I don't yet have a digital camera. You see, I still think it's 1988. By the way, Bride's latest album, *Live To Die*, is awesome!! However, I don't know what Pure Metal is thinking by signing Rosanna's Raiders. They're rock at best, but definitely not metal!! However, I hear that there's this band called Vengeance that's going to release an album called *Human Sacrifice* later this year or sometime in 1989. I hear they make Slayer sound like Styx. I'm looking forward to seeing Vengeance as well as The Crucified this year at Cornerstone. Oh yeah, I also hear that Bloodgood is going to release a pop metal album. Do you know anything about this? Oh well, I think I'll put out on *Atomic Arena* right now. They sure don't make power metal in the traditional Maiden/Priest genre these days in these cheese-laden Hair Metal Days. Okay, enough of the goofiness. As you probably guessed, I come from the early days of Christian Metal. I just wanted to send you some encouragement to keep Heaven's Metal running. You have asked for some ideas and the like. I like the fact that you cover the bands that have been around from back in the day, such as Stryken, Stryper and Tourniquet, etc. I enjoyed the interview with Ty Tabor of Kings X. I also appreciate the fact that you also cover artists like Jimmy P Brown II, letting us know what he's up to. Also, it's great reading about the metal of today, like Divinefire, Theocracy and Temple of Blood. These bands, along with many others, I think are defining where Christian Metal is going. I'd like to see more stories and reviews on the new bands that are in the Christian Metal Underground. One of Christian Metal's best kept secrets is Pastor Brad (guitarjams.net). He has several CD's out, his latest being an instrumental project called *Shred*. He's at work on a new CD, called *ReShredded*, which will feature guest appearances from Richard Lynch and Dee Harrington of Saint, among other underground musicians. In other words, I would like to see you cover more new inde metal bands and maybe leave the more mainstream stuff for HM. Also, what would be cool would be to maybe reprinting a classic interview, like from the 80's or early 90's each issue. I also thoroughly enjoy reading Steve Rowe and Pastor Bob's columns each month. Maybe doing a Bible study page would be cool. I have always enjoyed the back cover of Heaven's Metal since the inception. By the way, the back cover of issue 65 is awesome. Something I need to remind myself of daily. Keep it METAL!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

—Rob Deacon, via internet

Ed — Let's see if I've got this straight: more new metal, less old, but old interviews? You got it.

[nothin' but] News bullets

The Swiss celtic-pagans of **Eluveitie** have left Fear Dark and signed a deal with Twilight (Endstille, Koldbrann) from Germany. Both Fear Dark and Eluveitie think this is best for the band, as Twilight is one of the biggest underground labels in the European scene. This way the band can continue to grow. In early 2007 their debut CD, *Spirit*, already sold 6,000 copies. Eluveitie also signed a deal with one of Europe's biggest booking agencies, Rock The Nation (Behemoth, Deathstars, Kataklysm). This summer the band will play some of the biggest metal festivals in Europe, including Summer Breeze (with Finntroll, Dark Funeral) in Germany and Metal Camp (with Amon Amarth, Immortal) in Slovenia.

Kekal is pleased to announce that they have signed licensing deals with Whirlwind Records (who will release the album in the European and some South American territories) and Open Grave Records (who will release the album in USA, Canada, Japan and Australia). The new CD, *The Habit Of Fire*, will be released May 15th. The *Beyond The Glimpse of Dreams* will not be re-issued on CD. This album is now only available exclusively through Digital Download, authorized and managed directly by the band.

Morphia is writing songs for the follow-up to their successful album, *Fading Beauty*. Also Slechtvalk hopes to record a new album later this year. The band recently joined Swedish pagan-metal band Manegarm on a short tour through Holland and Belgium.

Hard rockin' Birmingham, Alabama sextet **Maylene and the Sons of Disaster** kick off 2007 by announcing the release of a Digital-only EP entitled *The Day Hell Broke Loose at Sicard Hollow*, which will contain the brand new songs "Dry the River," "Don't Ever Cross a Trowel" and the previously unreleased track, "Is That a Threat or a Promise." They've completed their eagerly anticipated sophomore album (and Ferret Music debut), *II*, which expounds on the true tales of 1920's gangster Ma Barker and her prohibition era real-life crime family, pushing the ingredients from their critically acclaimed, self-titled debut toward a more complex assault. The album will feature a striking 16-page booklet featuring powerful photography from Ryan Russell (Mastodon, Big Business, Slayer).

Bombworks Records just signed **CommonYet Forbidden** (from Orlando, FL), who mix new thrash and death metal to create a furious, technical, wall of sound. Their debut full length debut should be out this summer.

Ultimatum has been hard at work finishing up their fourth full length album called *Into the Pit*. Recorded in their home town of Albuquerque, NM at Site 16 Studios with producer Ysidro Garcia at the helm.

Neon Cross has a new album due out this spring.

Paramaecium is over, but the members are carrying on with a new sound and new name - inExordium.

Bloodgood plans a showcase at GMA in Nashville.

Rocketown Records just signed **Geoff Moore**, who is returning to his early, Springsteen/Seger-ish roots.

RETROACTIVE RECORDS



JUPITER VI – BACK FROM MARS

Wild, musical brilliance from metal icon, Jimmy Brown (Deliverance). A cauldron of vibrant creativity, with infectious hooks from start to finish! Rock critics are calling *Back From Mars* an important, breakthrough record! For fans of Deliverance, The Killers, David Bowie and Iggy Pop!



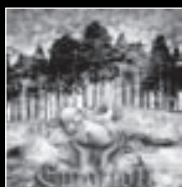
FINAL AXE – THE AXE OF THE APOSTLES

"Fists to the sky, headbanging, leather-clad heavy metal! *The Axe of the Apostles* is pure heavy metal, not unlike bands like Armored Saint, Saint, and early Savatage. Crunchy guitars, headbanging riffs, guitar solos, sing-along choruses, and the whole nine yards..." —nolifetilmetal.com (Scott Waters / Ultimatum) Features STRYPER'S Robert Sweet on drums!!!



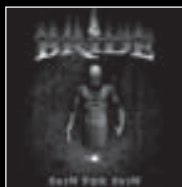
THE SEVENTH POWER – THE SEVENTH POWER

Featuring Robert Sweet (STRYPER) on drums and Bill Menchen (TITANIC/FINAL AXE), this sinister metal album will delight fans of melodic, almost doomy metal, in the vein of classic Black Sabbath and Ozzy.



EMOTION – EMOTION (Special Edition)

This is melodic metal from Sweden, influenced by progressive metal greats (Narnia, Rob Rock, and Sacred Warrior) as much as from the classics (Deep Purple/Rainbow). Remastered, with the five tracks from the ultra rare *Tip To Toe* EP added as a bonus!



BRIDE – SKIN FOR SKIN

All new release from Christian metal greats! Strident, triumphant, and astoundingly self-assured, expect razor-sharp, muscular riffs, and Dale's most accomplished vocals to-date! This is THE release fans have been begging for!



X-SINNER – FIRE IT UP

Re-recorded classic X-sinner songs that ruled the Christian rock and metal charts! Beefed up guitars, improved solos, and killer vocals - the way the band always wanted it! "Taking the all out raw energy of AC/DC and combining it with the catchy hooks and commercial sensibility of Def Leppard, *Fire It Up* proves (to be)...fresh, memorable and exciting..." —angelicwarlord.com



ZION – THRILLSEEKER

"Gritty, scratchy and hard rocking while delivering an abundance of energy at the same time..." —angelicwarlord.com. Demos and rarities collection delivers the goods! Features X-Sinner vocalist, Rex Scott!!!



X-SINNER – LOUD & PROUD +2

"...the quality of the unreleased material, it makes *Loud & Proud +2* nothing less than a necessary purchase." —angelicwarlord.com. Remastered with two bonus tracks!

TITANIC – FULL STEAM AHEAD

Melodic power metal extraordinaire, featuring Stryper's Robert Sweet on two bonus tracks! For fans of Judas Priest, Saint, Metal Church.

DELIVERANCE – AS ABOVE ~ SO BELOW

Majestic, epic, and classic progressive metal with thrash influences mark the return of the one of Christian metal's most prolific bands of all time!!!

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Look for the
following new
releases in April
2007!



Have you ever wondered what happened to some of the artists you used to listen to, but have not heard about in a long time? We, at Heaven's Metal, do too. That's why we are starting a new feature each issue where we track down a personality from the metal era gone by and see what they are up to today. Do they still make music or have their lives been taken in a completely different direction? We are as excited as you are to hear about where they have been led since they last graced our ears with their talents.

Our first interview in this new series is with Jonathan Pagano. You may remember Jonathan as the driving force and voice behind the band Novella. Novella first hit the metal scene back in 1989, when their single, "Running Home" was featured on the compilation disc, *The Axemen*. They followed that up with 2 albums, *One Big Sky* released in 1991, which received three Dove Award nominations, and *Liquid Earth* in 1992. After touring extensively as Novella, Jonathan came back as a solo artist with a lighter feel and released two more albums, *Shadowdance* in 1994 and *Push* in 1996. After touring for *Push* by opening for Petra, Jonathan disappeared from the music scene completely. After a search by our crack investigative team (well, me!), we were able to track Jonathan down in Nashville, where he is a successful businessman. He accepted the chance to speak with us and look back on where he was with Novella and how he got to where he is today. Jonathan was open and honest in his thoughts and gave a lot of insight into his mindset then and now. I really enjoyed speaking with him again. Let's take a look.

TW: You guys kind of hit the scene when your single "Running Home" was on *The Axemen* CD back in 1988, correct?

JP: I think it was '89.

I really liked "Running Home" on that compilation and was really excited when *One Big Sky* came out 2 years later.

Right. That album came out in '91.

Those 2 Novella CD's are still among my favorite CD's in my collection and I listen to them regularly to this day.

Wow.

You were originally from New Jersey, and then you made the move at some point to Nashville, correct?

Yeah. Just to give you a little bit of background: I had entered a song contest hosted by a Christian record company out of Pennsylvania called Refuge Records. And so I entered the song "Running Home" and it was selected. They placed it on *The Axemen* compilation, 'cause it was their compilation record. That was the same label that Whitecross was on. And the song did really well with Christian rock radio. From there that record company offered me specifically and individually a recording contract. And I, at that point, never saw myself as a solo artist. So, at that point, I had been in different bands that I had put together with different musicians along the way. And on the strength of having a record contract I was able to put together a core group of musicians, and called the group Novella and recorded *One Big Sky*. And then during the recording of the album, Star Song bought Refuge Records – for Whitecross, specifically. They were gonna dump everybody else pretty much. When Dez Dickerson, who was our A&R guy, came down and heard the record we were producing, he was quite amazed by it and then things happened from there. That's how we ended up on Star Song and it wasn't too long after that we decided as a group – we were travelling a lot, which is difficult from New Jersey (when) the record company is in Nashville – "let's move to Nashville," and took it from there.

Okay. Do you still keep up with any of the guys you played with back then from either album?

Yeah. I speak to them occasionally. One of them is back in New Jersey, one is in Indianapolis and one is in Atlanta, so I don't see them, but we do talk every once in a while.

Now, when you released *Push*, things seemed to be going pretty well. The single was getting airplay and you had formed your own company – "KingSing," correct?

Right. That was a record label that I started. On a shoestring budget I did *Shadowdance* and then I happened to have a bit more capital when I did the *Push* record. And yeah, things were on an upswing and I guess if I had grunted it out some more I could have done well. But I was at a point in life where I had decided that I just didn't... The uncertainty was more than I could stand in the sense that I was older at that point in time ... and I'm more practical, I think, than most musicians in the sense that I thought at that age I was still able to go off and do something else and be successful at it, number one. Number two: the life. After doing it for such a long time, the life of being on the road all the time just got to me as well. I got to the point where, you know, you start as a musician, you start as a songwriter, you start as a performer and love doing all that and then you morph into a music business guy, which I had no desire to be. It seemed like that took up more time than the passion of actually writing music and playing music and performing music. And at that point I was also 35. I had always said, even from the very beginning, 'If I didn't get to a certain level at age 35 – and it didn't have to be superstardom, because I wasn't looking for that, but a certain level – then I was just going to cut my losses and go do something else. The music business is a tough business. The Christian music business is not any easier. If anything it may be tougher.

Yeah, I have heard that from others in the industry.

And ... you know, this could be just my own stupid thinking, but there was always a part of me that said my music is a little bit over the heads of most "Christian music" listeners.

I can see that point of view, because most of the songs you did are not the standard formulaic – you know, stanza/chorus/stanza/chorus/bridge/chorus fade.

Right!

"You know, it didn't matter to me. There could have been three people there or a thousand people there. It was irrelevant."

"I was going to do what I was supposed to do and what I was passionate about doing, so I never got hung up on how big the crowd was."

There was a little more depth to it ... the melody always moved around a little more and a little differently than your normal catchy pop tune.

Exactly. So, where that stuff seems to be doing well now in Christian music, back in the early 90's I don't think anybody was really doing that kind of music. It was more of a bubblegum, pop-rock, pop metal kind of a sound; which is easy to grasp, it's easy to listen to ... and I was feeling like my music was going over people's heads. Whereas if I was in mainstream music, you could be a Queensryche, for example, and play real intricate music and you can have a core group of people who are going to catch on, and that became a large core group of people – enough to sell several million records and whatnot. But, in Christian music that wasn't happening. There wasn't the crossover potential there is now.

Right. The labels back then were probably still more "in house" and now those Christian labels have been taken over by some of the bigger mainstream music corporations.

Yeah. That happened after the fact for me. So I was a little ahead of my time, maybe? I don't know. That's for other people to judge ... but I pretty much saw the writing on the wall. And what I mean by that is, you go to the festivals and you see all of the Christian kids just flock to (bands), because they have a spinning drum riser? Right then and there I knew it was over for us... (laughter)

I understand what you are saying.

But that was the reality of Christian music back then and probably to some degree even now. Which I guess if I had a regret, it would have been that I went the Christian route and not just the mainstream route, because we were playing clubs in Jersey back then and getting a lot of attention at that point in the late 80's and early 90's. Cause at that point our stuff wasn't ... at that point everything was still heavy metal and we weren't in that mold. We were kind of a little bit different. The grunge thing was coming out and we were kind of like between that and the hard rock thing. So, we probably could have done well. But again, when I got into the Christian music scene and saw what was really happening, I just knew ... I had this feeling, "I don't know if things are going to go great." (laughter)

Almost a product again of the whole MTV generation, where the visual and the effects are more important than the substance of what you're putting out there.

Yeah, exactly.

Well, I think there are still some people out there who have an appreciation today for the music you made back then. In preparing for the interview I "googled" for this on the internet, and came across several message board entries for 2006 where people had dusted off their Novella CD's and were like, "you know, this was really good stuff..."

I have not done that in a while, so that's new!

One of my favorite sites is Melodicrock.com. Andrew McNeice over there really keeps up-to-date on everything and has a large and strong base of fans of all styles of the rock genre that visit his site. On their "noticeboard" a couple of months ago, someone had posted that they had just picked up your CD's at a used CD store and were commenting on how good they were and if anyone could tell him more information on the band or where he could get more material. And I know they can be found time to time on Ebay. Even 15 years later your records are still making an impact and are appreciated, which is kind of cool.

Yeah, that is.

Your business bio states that you are still active in church life. Did you consider what you were doing in Novella and your 2 solo albums a "ministry," so to speak, or was this more of a musical outlet, or...?

You could tell lyrically that I considered it as a way to express what I believed. I considered it a way to ... maybe not so overtly, but a way to inspire other people who held the same beliefs that I do. Now, was it straight-out ministry? There were phases in what I did which were straight out ministry, especially on the solo side. It was more ministry-oriented than Novella was. But I always held strong to the belief that just because you are Christians doesn't mean that you have to be overtly "ministry" in your music. And again, in the early 90's, in that environment, that was bucking a trend.

Right.

Because that was a big controversy.

Yes. You had certain groups who were of the opinion that if you were up there in that position that you needed to preach it and preach it hard. And there were others who felt you could just lead by example, as you put it, and what you find is that not everyone is gonna take that hardcore pounding. Sometimes it has to slowly seep in, what you are hearing and listening to, and understand it and allow it into your heart.

Exactly. Look, if I wanted to be a preacher, I would have done that. That is not my forte. So, my idea was let the music do what it is supposed to do – let the lyrics and the music do what it is supposed to do. So, I wasn't very preachy when it came to that at concerts.

What were the highlights and lowlights of your music career?

That is a good question. I think the highlight probably was being nominated for 3 Doves (Awards). One of them was for "New Artist of the Year" and everybody ... the record company was shocked! We were the first, what they considered heavy metal or hard rock band that was nominated for that Dove "New Artist." Of course, we didn't win it. (laughter) We lost to Michael English ... but that pretty much was a highlight. That, along with first being signed and doing my first record was a real rush. I mean, it was a real energetic and creative release. And the low point, I guess, was really at the end of that Petra tour, which was really the end of my music career. I was just completely burned out. And walking away from it wasn't a sad thing for me. It was more of a release... "Okay, I did what I did and now it is time to move on." So, that was probably the lowest point.

Funny. I was thinking the highlight would have been the Orlando show (on the *Liquid Earth* tour) with only 17 people in the crowd and me, my best friend, Rich, and my sister Ellen all singing backup on "Heaven's on My Mind" for you when you sat down at our table. I would have thought that would have been the thrill of your career, but I guess not.

(Laughter) I forgot! You're right! It was! (more laughter)

You know that is the one thing ... when we walked away from that show that night ... we all commented, "Man there were 17 people and Jonathan still just sang his heart out!"

You know, it didn't matter to me. There could have been three people there or a thousand people there. It was irrelevant. I was going to do what I was supposed to do and what I was passionate about doing, so I never got hung up on how big the crowd was.

As fans we definitely appreciated that kind of effort. We went home going, "that was pretty awesome."

As a matter of fact, I can tell you singing to 17 people is in some ways better than singing to a thousand people. Because if you are singing to smaller crowds the energy level seems to be a little bit higher. It seems like you can get everybody in tune with what you are doing. When you are singing for two or three thousand people, it's just different. You are more disassociated from the crowd, no matter how hard you try. There are some artists who are just great at getting the whole crowd

Continued on page 10

Jonathan Pagano cont'd

involved, but it's just not the same as singing to one or two hundred people.

Yeah ... you literally can get the eye contact and get the response from everyone in the room as you are up there performing.
Exactly.

What was the biggest crowd you ever did play for?

Some of the festivals were real big. You are talking about, gosh, 10 or 20 thousand!

Really?

Those were probably the biggest – those festivals. I know some of the Petra dates were pretty big as well, but I think the festival dates were much bigger. When we played Creation, when we played Atlantafest, when we played Flevo in Holland ... that was just huge. That crowd was about 15 thousand.

I have a side question. Knowing your relationship with Plinky and then Glenn Burtnick, who appeared on your *Push* album...

Yeah ... he did cut some tracks on that record...

...When I had heard that Styx and Dennis DeYoung had parted ways, the first name that popped into my head was yours, knowing that you had a relationship with them. Did Plinky or Glenn ever call you and say, "Hey, this has opened up and we thought of you?"

(Laughter) Umm ... No! I was never a thought. (More laughter)

Just wondered. I always thought your voice certainly could have filled in what Dennis had done.

Well, Glenn stepped into those shoes pretty much when they recorded "Show me the Way."

Right. He took the guitar spot for Tommy Shaw on *Edge of the Century* and then when the bassist, Pannozzo, had to retire, Glenn re-joined to play bass at that point, I believe, so I think he was a member again when Dennis departed. If I may ask, how old you were when "Running Home" came out in '89?

Let's see. I would have been 26.

Did you already have your Bachelor's Degree at that point?

Yes, I did. At that point I was running 2 businesses in New Jersey. I always had a mind for business. I was very much involved ... I spearheaded all the business efforts for the band – both for Novella and as a solo artist. So it wasn't a foreign topic for me, running businesses and being business-minded. I am very different that way from most musicians. Most musicians are just left-brained people and I always thought that I was a decent blend. I could be left-brained, but I could be right-brained as well – being critical and analytical as well as artistic.

That would seem to be a good combination to have if you are going to be successful, because you have to think about how to appeal to the masses and get your product out there and be creative in that point; but, at the same time, keep your feet on the ground enough to make sure you are executing a solid business plan.

Right.

According to your business bio, you are co-owner or managing partner... Are things going well? Things successful?

Yes! Business is very, very successful. I am a partner in a financial planning firm and asset management firm and again I see myself as one of the fortunate people in the world in the sense that I had a strong passion for music and that wasn't my only passion. I've got a very strong passion for what I am doing now. I love what I do now. So people ask me all the time, "Do you miss music?" and the answer is really that I don't.

Hum!

That was a great time in my life. I think back on it with great memories. I pull those records out every once in a while and I'll listen to it ... wish sometimes things had gone better ... but, you know, they are what they are. And I am very fortunate to have found something else I am very passionate about.

That's great! Some people cannot make that transition in their lives when the direction that they thought their lives were gonna go doesn't happen.

Well, again, I pretty much saw the writing on the wall.

Your bio says you are active in "Kidstuff" at your church. What is "Kidstuff?"

"Kidstuff" is a youth program really geared towards 3 or 4 year olds up to maybe 10 or 12 year olds, and it's a music and drama program. It's actually a national program. I don't know who started it, but I know that our church is very active in it and there are other churches that use the program as well. I am one of the guys up there doing some of the singing and it's a really great professional – at least at our church – it's done very, very professional. They see it as a way to compete with a lot of the other stuff that's in the world – the Nickelodeons and all that that's out there. And deliver a really good and simple message to kids.

So, you do still have an outlet for your singing?

Yeah I do, but it's, you know, I'm only involved once a week with the program. It's not a major involvement for me musically. I do get asked quite often to do things, but I don't take advantage of many of them, but this is one that I have.

So, you really don't have any desire at this point to open a "myspace" page and put up a couple of songs just to get them out there and open up a creative outlet?

You know ... no, I don't. I don't even have the time really to write. Because for me, maybe some other writers have a different experience, but for me it was really a painful birthing process to write a song. It wasn't: "sit down, I've got my 3 chords here and let me come up with a melody." For me it was painful! I would start with an idea and I would edit it relentlessly until I came up with what I thought was the best I could come up with at that point in time. So again, if I ever wrote pop music, maybe I would have had a different attitude, but the stuff that I was writing, that's how I did it. For me to go back and do that again would just take too much time and effort.

I can imagine if you are a managing partner, you are trying to keep a business afloat, at the same time you've got to deal directly with your clients, you have to keep up with ... in the financial planning world there is constant changes that you are trying to stay on top of, and then you have to balance a home life with a wife and a couple of kids ... I can imagine that wouldn't leave much time for anything else.

Exactly.

Do you have any closing comments?

Closing comments? Well, I guess you got from the (business) website as well, I've got 2 children. I met my wife in Holland when I was touring with Novella ... and we are expecting our third son!

Well, congratulations!

Thank you. Family life is good. I'm really in a place now where I'm loving life and feel really at peace with where my life is and what I am doing. I completely believe that God ordains our lives and if He wanted me to be in a different place I would be in a different place. I just really believe that. I believe that He had me doing what I did for a season, because that's what He wanted me to do and then that was it for whatever reason. Whether it was to crack open that Christian music door a little bit wider, along with others, to where it is today ... a little bit more freer, a little bit more open ... I don't know. History will tell what my role was. But things are good now. I guess that's about it. Thanks, Todd. Appreciate it and the chance to talk.

Thank you Jonathan!

You have a great day!

You, too. Goodbye.

Goodbye.

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MY SILENT WAKE

INTERVIEW BY CHRIS BECK

IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT IAN ARKLEY, THE VOICE AND MASTERMIND BEHIND SUCH BANDS AS ASHEN MORTALITY AND SEVENTH ANGEL, HAS A GREAT DEAL OF GOD-GIVEN TALENT. THUS, THE EARLY SUCCESS OF MY SILENT WAKE, IAN'S LATEST UNDERTAKING, SHOULD COME AS A SURPRISE TO NO ONE. WE RECENTLY CAUGHT UP WITH IAN TO DISCUSS MY SILENT WAKE'S NEXT ALBUM AND WHETHER THERE IS ANY TRUTH TO THE RUMORS OF SEVENTH ANGEL'S REFORMATION.

Chris Beck: *Shadow of Sorrow* has been well received by both fans and the press. What's been happening with the band since the album's release?

Ian Arkley: We have been working on the follow-up to *Shadow of Sorrow* since we recorded the album. The time has been spent writing, rehearsing and at various times throughout last year, recording.

Now that the album has been out for several months, looking back, did it turn out the way you wanted it to? Would you have done anything differently?

I am still happy with the album. The whole thing was recorded and mixed in less than five days. I think that it captured the feel of a new band that was eager to get its sound out there and I think it was a good start for us. The new album has been a lot harder to record and we have been a lot fussier this time around. There are a lot more layers and various instruments on the new songs. We have used the same engineer and studio as on *SoS*, as we were so pleased with the results. I would not have done anything differently on *SoS*, and I am proud of what the band achieved.

The lyrics deal with pain suffered from loss, regret from past actions, etc. What would you say to someone who feels that the lyrics don't offer enough hope or promise – more specifically, that they don't always clearly point to Christ as the answer?

We are not the kind of band that will offer pat answers to problems. The songs are written from the heart and are real; they are not contrived at all. The band is not a "Christian band" and we are not all Christians in the band. This is something we have never tried to hide and are always upfront about. For us, the important thing is honesty and integrity. People will find their own inspiration from the lyrics, especially if they are going through those difficult times. Sometimes we have issues and the answers do not come and we endure suffering for a time. That is real life.

The cover art by Rexorcist on *Shadow of Sorrow* is

excellent. How much input did you have on this?

Yes, it is excellent – he is very talented. The artwork was already done and in his archives, but he did more work on it and we did have a say in how we wanted it to look. He also did the booklet artwork from some of our photos.

You also released *Century Sleeper (Awaken)*, a collaboration with James Allin (Visionaire), shortly after *Shadow of Sorrow*. Given that the musical style of each album is quite similar, why did you release them so close together? Is *Century Sleeper* a one time project, so you can continue to focus on *My Silent Wake*?

I feel that the albums are very different from each other. MSW has a much more primal sound and CS has a more polished technical sound to it. The album *Awaken* was actually recorded while Ashen Mortality was still together and MSW was not even in existence, but the release date was put back a number of times and in the end it came out after *SoS*. CS is not a one-time project and we do plan to record the follow-up to *Awaken* next year. There is also a release imminent for the other band I play in called, The Other Window. This will be the second release from TOW. The band is Alan's (also in MSW) brainchild and I had a lot of good times working with TOW. The music we play in that band is space rock and is very influenced by Hawkwind, but has touches of punk, goth and metal.

Both *My Silent Wake* and *Century Sleeper* were released by Bombworks Records. Has your relationship with them been satisfactory?

Bombworks are great. They are two really nice, easy-to-get-along-with people and they are totally behind us. They have done so much for us in terms of promotion and advertising and have really gone out of their way to be a good label to us, although they are only just getting off of the ground. We are releasing the second MSW album with them, hopefully at the end of April.

Rumors persist regarding a future *Seventh Angel* release, perhaps fueled by the recent introduction of a MySpace site for the band, or perhaps wishful thinking by the seemingly large fanbase that

still exists today. Do you have any future plans for *Seventh Angel*?

I actually saw Tank for the first time in about 11 or 12 years last April. It was great to see him again and we got together with Si Bibby, Earl Morris, Mark Broomhead and Jon Willis at a party Tank organized. I would love to work with them all again, but things are so busy with other things at the moment. If we got a serious offer for a recording and a tour, we would probably have to go for it, though!

Whether it be *Ashen Mortality*, *My Silent Wake* or *Century Sleeper*, your music easily fits into the doom sub-genre of metal. The beginnings of this could even be heard on *Seventh Angel's* second album, *Lament for the Weary*, which was quite a departure from the thrash metal on *The Torment*. After almost 20 years, did you think you would still be making this type of music? Are you happy with where you are at in your music career?

Yes, very happy. I am doing the music I love now more than ever before. I am very pleased with the new MSW album and I feel that we have been able to do things musically that were never possible before, in terms of instrumentation and experimentation. I have always loved goth and more psychedelic music and have been able to do both in CS and TOW, so things are great as far as being able to express things artistically. I don't know if I knew I would still be doing this after all these years, but I don't think I ever wanted to stop and probably never will.

Any last words for the readers of *Heaven's Metal*?

To those that understand MSW and appreciate what we do, I would like to say a big 'thank you.' Your support means a lot to us. To those that do not understand us, there are plenty of other bands out there. One thing you will get with us is honesty. We are not trying to be something we are not, and we are very committed to being the best band we can be.

HEAVEN'S
METAL



MAJESTIC VANGUARD

INTERVIEW BY JOHANNES JONSSON

Sweden is without a doubt one of the leading countries when it comes to metal. One of the new bands hailing from this frostbitten land is Majestic Vanguard. To find out more about this talented band I decided to interview the band's drummer and spokesman, Daniel Eskilsson.

First, can you please start with telling us about how Majestic Vanguard began and the history of the band so far?

First of all: Thanks for making this interview and thanks for a great fanzine! Well, back in the early nineties, Samuel Fredén, Andreas Andersson and I were part of a band that from the beginning was founded by me and a friend of mine. After some interesting years we were forced to split up when our keyboard player left the band. 4-5 years later Samuel, Andreas and I contacted each other again. We began to talk about the possibilities to start a new metal band. The year was now '98 - '99 and the following years we did some sad efforts to play. In the year of 2003 we decided to give Peter Sigfridsson a chance in the band and it all turned out very well. We did a demo tape that was a real triumph and received a label deal with Rivel Records. With this new situation, we decided to open up for a new guitar player, Johan Abelson.

The Majestic Vanguard was born and in the spring-time 2005 we recorded our debut album, *Beyond the Moon*. The result was very pleasing and it was really exciting to let everyone hear this, as we felt, (it was) great material! The progress of this album has been fun to follow and we haven't seen the end of it yet ... I hope! 2006 was a really tough year for us, due to the fact that our lead singer, Peter, received problems with his vocal cords during our release gig in October 2005. The medical examinations were positive, but still it took over a year before Peter returned to the band. Gladly for us all, Peter is now fully recovered and it feels great to have him back! Be prepared to see Majestic Vanguard back in full strength again this year.

What do you mean with the name Majestic Vanguard and why did you choose that name?

From the beginning our name was Divine Disciples, but when we received a label deal we felt that we were in a big need of a new, fresh name. We wanted to indicate that this was the beginning of something new, therefore we decided to change. Majestic Vanguard is a very powerful name, with a great symbolic strength. For us the name indicates that we want to be our Heavenly Father's

"Majestic Vanguard!"

How would you describe your sound? Any comparisons?

From the beginning we were very progressive and almost experimental. During the time when we had no singer, we had a basic lineup in the band: drums, bass and guitar. But, we also played with two guitars, or guitar and keyboard. This constant changing of instruments gave us time to develop a signature sound. We see ourselves as a heavy power metal band, but we also have a lot of progressive elements in our music. I think you can define the band as a progressive power metal band! Comparisons...? Hmm, I really don't know, but a mix of Stratovarius, Royal Hunt and Veni Domine might be close enough! There are some reviewers that actually define and compare our music with the first Dream Theatre albums, but I don't know... Buy our album and find out for yourselves! Mail me when you have a sound suggestion ... should be exciting to hear ... He, he!

Which are your musical influences?

Well, we have many different influences in the band. But since I am writing most of the music, maybe my influences have stamped the band a



little. I really like music that is well thought-out: Veni Domine, Rhapsody and Dream Theatre (the early albums) are some of my favourites... King's X, Act and Stryper are other metal influences for the band! We like listening to all music in general, everything from soul to death metal. As long the music inspires, I guess you can call it an influence.

How has the response been to your album?

Well, the response has been fantastic! We have received reviews all over the world with great results! There are radio stations and websites that rank *Beyond the Moon* as the best album of 2005, and that is pretty awesome. The whole feeling around the release and the response after has been way over our expectations! I receive mail every week from fans all over the world that love our album and are interested in the band. I also receive mail that contains testimonies about how the album has affected people and changed their lives. Such testimonies are amazing and give us a lot of spirit to continue with what we are doing!

What do you see as the goals for MV? What do you want to accomplish with the band?

The focus has always been to serve our Heavenly Father! A big challenge today is to become a good Christian example! This world provides us with so many choices and it's hard to find the right way when you constantly are forced away from the truth. This band is a great opportunity to glorify our Father's holy Name and that is our main goal and mission! I know that the situations for many Christian bands today are tough and they are sometimes forced not to talk about God during concerts. We will try, as much as we can, to present God everywhere we are, but I know that we have to deal with this situation through wisdom and prayers. The great thing is that even if you are forced not to talk about God, you can open up for the Holy Spirit to work. The way is through prayers! I think you always must believe in the Holy Spirit's desire to approach people that show interest in God. A band that is open for God can rely and believe that they are an instrument for God and work from there. That makes our mission so special! Besides that, hopefully we can continue to develop as a band and have a creative time when playing our music together. We really love playing metal and can't wait to meet everyone on tour. I also hope that we can continue to record albums, it's really fun! And who knows ... maybe we will enter the studio again this year?

Your singer, Peter Sigfridsson, has had some vocal problems the past year. How has that affected the band?

Yeah, it came as a big shock for us when Peter's vocal cords got injured during our release gig. I think you can imagine: we had worked almost a

year with preparations, recording sessions and rehearsals and when we were standing so close to the finish line, the voice crashed! It was a nightmare, especially for Peter, of course; but after the gig we embraced each other and tried to smile a little. We could never imagine that Peter's problems should continue for over a year and that fact was very difficult to deal with – being in doubt about how long this would actually continue! It was really sad to cancel those shows that were booked and the year that we have behind us has certainly not given our debut album the necessary conditions to succeed, but there's nothing we can do about that! There are at least two sides to every story and maybe the time when Peter was out of the band also has affected the band in some positive way? We have been able to spend more time with our families and that is very important for all of us! We also have been given time to slow down a little and the whole situation has given us more experience that we have good use for. From the time when we received the label deal to the release was extremely hectic and when you have families and kids it's impossible to deal with everything. You only live once and it's important to make the right decisions. Maybe this last year has been important for the band and the band's future. I think that we now have a better knowledge how to deal with the situations around an album recording and the work around a release! The great thing is that Peter is back in the band again and we are much excited to begin to play live again with the band's full strength!

MV has a strong Christ-centered message, while many bands choose to tune down the Christian message. Do you think it's important to be loud and clear about your faith in the lyrics in the time we live?

I don't think it's just important to be straight in the lyrics. I believe that if you have a Christian approach and see yourself as a Christian band, you have a responsibility to be very clear in your message! This doesn't always mean that every lyric that you write must be taken from John 3:16 or every concert you play be a divine service. Sometimes you have to approach with wisdom both within the lyrics, from your website and at your concerts! God never wants to throw messages into someone's face, but He wants to light up a spark in people's dark spaces and that's the biggest challenge for every Christian metal band today. Unfortunately, there are "Christian" metal bands that only have their Christian beliefs as a mask and use the Christian metal scene as a way of selling records! I know bands that call themselves Christian, but in the lyrics, on the websites, in interviews or during concerts never mention their beliefs. That is really sad! I can't blame anyone and I can never judge anyone (there will be a day when we all will stand before the throne), but

my question is: How is it possible to be called a Christian metal band when there is nothing in the messages, or the approaches that points to Jesus Christ? The Christian metal scene stands very strong today and the bands have reached a very high level and are receiving much more respect than earlier. But, this can never be happening as a cost of losing our focus on the cross! We have such little time left on this earth and we cannot waste our time searching for glory – especially when we already have been given the biggest gift: Jesus Christ. I think it's very simple. If you do something in God's Name, you will see things that are amazing. It doesn't matter if you play gospel or rock and roll. Just focus on Jesus and you and your band will be blessed. Those bands that choose to go in another direction, will enter a very difficult way! I really hope that both the Christian labels and bands take these issues very seriously in the future! Because we have a mission to accomplish and we really need warriors with the right focus in the "white metal" army! Majestic Vanguard has already marked our stand and we want to be in the first line!

What is your favourite Bible verse and why?

5 Moses 6:5.* It is a fantastic word of wisdom and has an exhortation to love our God with all our hearts! *(a reference to Deuteronomy 6:5)

What future plans do you have for the band?

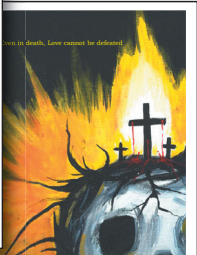
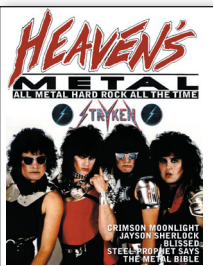
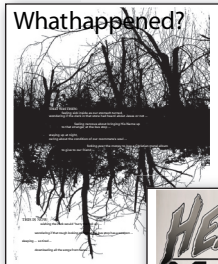
This year we really would like to play live a lot! Last year was a real blast for us and we have much to retain. I hope that we're not forgotten among the metal audience and I hope that we can meet our great fans on tour during this year! For the moment I try to write new music and I must say that it feels really good. And as I mentioned before, maybe we will begin to record a new album this year?

Last, but not least, do you have any final words for the readers of Heaven's Metal?

I hope that if you don't already have our album, *Beyond the Moon*, hopefully you will get the chance to buy it somewhere! It is a very special album for us and we are really proud of it! You are also very welcome to visit our website [majesticvanguard.net]. Please write us an email or sign up in the guestbook! We also have a myspace site [myspace.com/majesticvanguard], where you can drop by and say hello! Stay focused on the Lord! God Bless!

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ALBUM REVIEWS

STRYPER

GREATEST HITS: LIVE IN PUERTO RICO

At this sold-out show in San Juan, Puerto Rico, the crowd is as big as the band played to in arenas during their heyday, circa 1987-1988. The audio and video here is absolutely professional quality. The band has never sounded better, Michael Sweet hitting all the right notes, Oz Fox soloing on cue, Robert Sweet pounding his massive drum kit while having a great time, and original bassist Tim Gaines reveling in the moment. This was Gaines' final show, as he's since departed to pursue other musical interests. Only two complaints. There are no extras, and it seems that the live video footage is spliced together with footage that didn't actually take place in one seamless show in San Juan. This is a limited edition run, which leaves open the possibility for this being sold in stores in the future. If that happens, let's hope the band packs it full of extra goodies. [Fifty Three Five] Chad Olson



FOUNTAIN OF TEARS

FATE

Though this operatic/symphonic music release finds beautiful keyboard work high in the mix, there is enough underlying crunchy guitar and shredding melodic solos to qualify for a review in a metal magazine. We have to mention a few things first: the band consists of ex-members of some of the heaviest bands in Christian music in their day, such as Believer (drummer Joe Daub), Sacrament (guitarist Mike DiDonato and bass-player Erik Ney), and Sardonyx (keyboardist Jeff King), so the roster is stacked with talent, and it shows. On top of that, this independent release is top-notch from the ground up – packaging, production, mix, etc. is all so amazing. So, you take some of the musical direction and stylings of latter Believer's symphonic structure, back it down just a tad, add some very talented and tasteful keyboards, a handful of slightly progressive twists a la Transatlantic, Porcupine Tree and the lighter side of Dream Theater, and you get this unique blend of progressive/symphonic/atmospheric rock with a foundation of metal interwoven throughout. For those of you who can slow down a bit

an enjoy music with feeling, you are going to love this. It took the third listen for me to exclaim "AMAZING!" So, give it a chance and play it loud! [indie] Jeff McCormack



EVERGRACE

S/T

More Swedish power metal, and again I must ask if there is something in the water over there? I want to move over there and play in a band – they seem to breed mind-blowing musicians. Evergrace is a six-man outfit, which show amazing musicianship, with great amounts of crunch and powerful tight riffs, mixed with an ample amount of not-too-fast double bass and thundering drums, along with enough time changes / dynamics to make it all interesting to a degree. Vocals are powerful, melodic, clear and understated throughout. While I find many great traits about this release, I think it lacks just enough originality to stand up for long against the other amazing powerhouse bands of this genre on the market today. However, it is a great release, shows much promise for a first release, and I highly await the next, for sure. [Ulterium] Jeff McCormack



GRAND LUX

CARVED IN STONE

Well, they claim influences by such powerhouses as Dio, Stryper, Ozzy, Saxon and a handful of other amazing metal bands, but can they deliver? Oh my, yes, they can ... and they do. What is in the water over there? So many amazing metal bands from that side of the waters, this Norwegian classic/power metal band gives us all of the best classic metal sound and feel, with a modern vibe, amazing tight and powerful musicianship, with a superb mix and production clarity. Vocals styles vary throughout, with a mid-to-upper-octave range, giving us sounds similar to Michael Sweet, Dio and Dale Thompson – consistently clear and powerfully melodic. Pure power metal crunch, hooks and classic metal appeal, with cut after cut of non-stop energy, this release will surely please any classic metalhead who is into today's sounds of euro-metal like Hammerfall, Dream Evil, Narnia and the like. [Ulterium] Jeff McCormack



THE FIFTH SUN

THE HUNGER TO SURVIVE

Ahh, pure, uncontaminated metal! Bone-crunching riffs, driving rhythms, tasteful leads and throaty pipes. This is straight up death metal – surprisingly creative and extremely well executed. It's hard to imagine how a band of this caliber has stayed under the radar so long. These guys exhibit a tremendous respect for the Creation – the lyrics clean, intelligent and mature. The sonics here are exceptional, but the excellent, mostly discernable vocals could be a bit more upfront in the mix. While neither as mind-boggling and melodic as Scar Symmetry nor as dynamic and faith oriented as Becoming the Archetype, the maturity and quality here prove these guys have the "hunger to survive." [indie] Jonathan Swank

BERITH

SYMPHONY OF THE SUFFERING

Doom encrusted, blackened death solidly infused with a thrash life-blood. Mix that concoction with top-notch production, and you have Berith's *Symphony of the Suffering*. The vocalist isn't the greatest by any means, but you know he still worked well in the context of the music. Now, if they will just add a touch more technical stuff to their riffing! [Extreme] Mike Larson



THE SHOWDOWN

TEMPTATION COME MY WAY

The cutting, shredding guitars aren't as prominent as their debut album, but the rhythm section got tighter and the whole production got a big fat "whoomp!" of heaviness. [Mono v. Stereo] DVP



ABANDON

S/T

These guys have got to be listening to tons of Alice and Chains and Metallica. You know this release sort of runs the sound-alike gambit. Jumping from influence to influence, but despite their obvious hero worship, they've got their own feel thru it all. [Indie] Mike Larson

Surf this: replicarec.com, crosswalkrecords.com, deloreanrocks.com, xploya.com



OUTWORLD

S/T

Shred, dead? Shred is certainly not dead and this band surely shreds! Birthed from the embryonic Houston underground metal scene is axe-shredder Rusty Cooley and talented company. Endorsed by Dream Theater's John Petrucci, Cooley's precise yet liquid style sounds like Yngwie on speed. Still, the virtuoso incisions, while surgical, neither hemorrhage the power (nor the fantastic melody) from this progressive thrashing. While comparisons to Symphony X are fair, these guys are raw, just wild. Vocalist Carpenter, who wrote the lyrics, left the band before this was released, but has been replaced by the even more dynamic Brazilian, Carlos Zema (Heaven's Guardian). Gestational, perhaps, but this "steel" bites. Outworld shreds! [Replica] Jonathan Swank



SEVEN SYSTEM

HOPE ARISES

This album seems to catch its stride somewhere around the middle of track 3 and settles in for a nice listen.

Hard rock played by a hardcore band with a definite worship vibe happening from time to time. Sadly, the band has disbanded, so get a copy of this quick. It's worth the effort. [Crosswalk] Mike Larson



DELOREAN

DAUNTLESS

Really clean and competent guitar playing, great tones dialed in, and the overall sound would pass for professional melodic metal... The lead vocals, while competent, don't fit the sound very well at all. I just can't get into this mixture of "la la la" and rock/metal. It ruins it for me. [indie] DVP

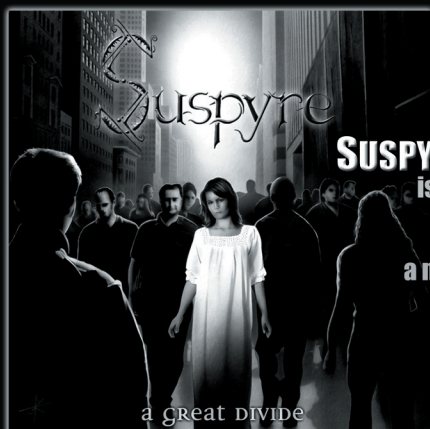


XPLOYA

JUST A DREAM

This may be post grunge Creed rock (singer Josh Jacobs sounds like a less strained Scott Stapp); but make no mistake, there is no angst to be found in these 12 well-crafted, inspirational songs. This disc is replete with gentle acoustic passages, "dreamy" keys, guest girl/child/choir vocals. Metalheads should be warned (there are precious few rockers here); but not dissuaded, because the sincerity and passion is both palpable and laudable. "Dreamlike," no doubt, but in the light of reality this is high quality modern praise rock. [indie] Jonathan Swank

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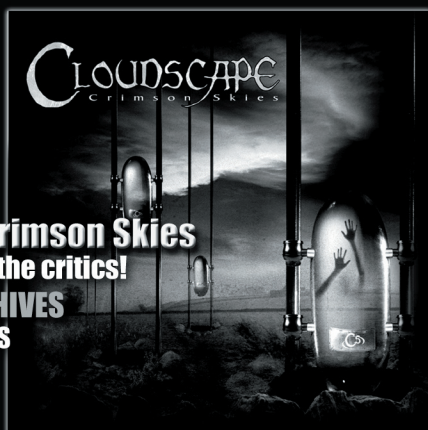
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THROWING DOWN THE GAUNTLET

By Steve Rowe

LOSSES & GAINS

In life we all face many losses. Best friends move away, parents may break up, we get kicked off the football team because of injury, girlfriends or boyfriends break up with someone who loves them. People get cancer, lose limbs in car accidents, go bankrupt, have houses repossessed. How do we deal with all this "real life" stuff going on? For some reason we cannot pray our way out of being affected by such losses. Good things happen to bad people and bad things happen to good people. Many say that God cannot be real, because there is just too much loss in the world. Problem is, man chose to use their free will and sin leads to death. So, let us put loss in perspective to gain. When we follow Christ as our Lord & Savior, all our scars can be turned into stars.

Through losing my best friends growing up, I gained Christian friends – who, over the years, have often been part of my music vision. My old friends got lost in drugs, boozing and gambling. At 32 I was diagnosed with cancer that, by human perspective, should have killed me. Through cancer I had the opportunity to speak to extremely ill people about Jesus. As a disabled person (I am an L4 paraplegic), I have had the chance to share my faith with others with physical disabilities, have new fans turning up to shows in wheelchairs & have competed at the national level in athletics – something I never got close to as an able-bodied teenager. I have lost half my eyesight, but I have gained great Vision. Every morning I spend one hour on a medical procedure. This gives God one hour of my day. I am a captive to this time. I am not going anywhere. What better time to read the Word & pray everyday. I get the best seats in the house for any concert or sporting event. Even if an event is sold out, none of them are ever sold out for people with disabilities. I would love to be healed fully, but the more I travel through life I see how God uses my life just the way it is right now.



So, don't lose heart. God is always there. Look for Him in both the good and the bad. Dare to have a go for God! None of us are an accident; and, unless you are dead already, God has a purpose for you. Gold cannot be turned into precious jewelry unless it has been refined by fire. Of course, there are consequences to every decision we make – both good and bad. But, put your trust in God and you – yes, even you – can do great exploits for The Kingdom of God.



TEMPLAR

WITCH HUNT



Not for the faint of heart, Templar is a darkwave metal project of Paradoxx, finally manifesting their musical ideas deemed unsuitable to Paradoxx's dark nu-electro sound.

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PASTOR BOB'S INTERNATIONAL REPORT

By Pastor Bob

Greetings!

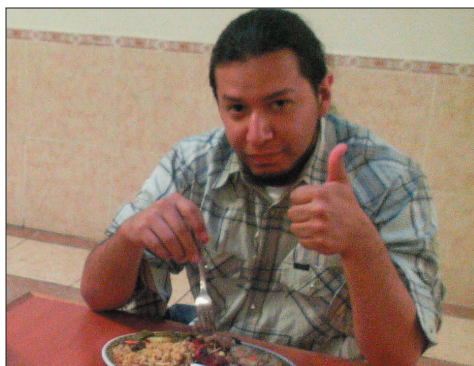
As I write this, I have just returned from speaking at the UNDERGROUND RENASCENT festival in Mexico City. I always love spending time with Pastor Miguel (see last month's International Report) and his Church there. They are doing amazing things. I spent some time with Roberto, who was making his living as a wizard before becoming a Christian just 7 months ago. His story, along with so many others, are further testimony to God's grace and love for the underground metal crowd!

I have asked three more international friends to share their ministries with you. Josef Norlin is involved in an exciting underground radio ministry to the young people of the Middle East. Josef has a real heart for ministry, and is a real innovator with modern technology. I speak with him every week on Skype (internet telephone) as he works to reach the kids in the Middle East. Denny and Maureen Hurst have an amazing ministry in Italy with the Metal crowd there. I spent some time with them during the summer. Finally, Hugo is a unique young man from Honduras. We ate Chinese Food in Mexico City together as he shared his heart and passion for the people of his country. Again, remember to pray for these underground ministries!

[sanctuaryinternational.com]



Honduras, Cyprus, Italy, & metal
Hugo Maradiaga, Josef Norlin & Denny+Maureen Hurst



Hugo Maradiaga – Honduras

Hi, every one. I'm writing from Honduras. I play in a local band that is using music as a tool to spread the Word. After gigging awhile, we met cool people with cool bands that were doing the same thing. So, we started to attend gigs where the bands were invited to support each other while playing. Soon, we realized that this wasn't enough, but didn't know how to take the next step.

Then something very cool happened. **Exousia** and **Deborah** from Mexico's **Alcance Subteraneo** visited our country and played here, and we got the chance to see how they work. This encouraged us to do something more than just play and preach from stage. There where people (metalheads) that needed more than good music with a message. They needed a place to learn more about Jesus as they grow to be

Christians, so we started a kind of a metalheads Bible study group.

There's such need in Honduras, because many churches see people's looks more than their repented hearts and we want to give these people the choice many churches deny them – a place where they feel comfortable with how they are and learn more about Jesus. We are a very small group of people, but at the same time we are very excited to see where the Lord is going to lead us. We still have much to learn, but thank God we have international friends to help.



Josef Norlin – Cyprus

My name is Josef Norlin. I work here in Cyprus developing an Arabic 24/7 music internet radio station to reach the youth in the Middle East. We want to create a forum and an interactive place for them to openly



talk about things that matter in their everyday life, and in a music environment that they feel at ease with. It's going to be youth doing radio for youth. They will be able to share personal testimonies applied in everyday dilemmas where their faith can personally be shared.

Denny & Maureen Hurst – Italy

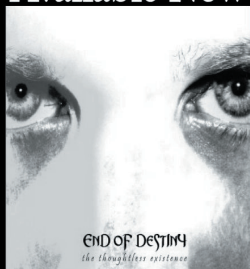
We have been missionaries in Italy for 21 years, using Christian rock music to build the Kingdom of God in this country. We have organized many concerts and tours here over the years with bands such as Rick Cua, Resurrection Band, Justifide & Pillar. We have since been called by God to start the first and only Christian Rock festival in Italy – *Rock on the Rock*, now in its fifth year. There is no CCM market or Christian music scene in Italy to support such an event, so we rely on sponsors and support from around the world to help us finance it and we need much help! Please pray that this event can grow to impact the youth of this nation, break down the walls of sectarianism and demonstrate what freedom in Jesus and living for Him is all about.

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